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Daily Information Session — 14.236 MHz @ 23:30z

TSUNAMI! DXpeditioners respond to disaster!

Like the tsunami, the Andaman-Nicobar Islands DXpedition came seemingly out of nowhere with little advance warning!

In November, 2004, Bharathi Prasad, VU2RBI, announced that she received special permission to operate from Port Blair from 3 December to 31 December, 2004. The DXpedition, sponsored by the National Institute of Amateur Radio (NIAR) in Hyderabad, India, would use the VU4RBI and VU4NRO call-signs and would include the following team members:

- Mrs. D. Bharathi Prasad, VU2RBI, Team Leader
- Mr. D. N. Prasad, VU2DBP
- Mr. S. Ram Mohan, VU2MYH
- Mr. R. Sarath Babu, VU3RSB, and,
- Mr. D. Varun Sastry, VU3DVS

The NIAR issued a detailed press release to introduce the DXpedition and define amateur radio as "much more than disaster management and disaster mitigation." The objectives of the DXpedition were: "to popularize and promote amateur radio activity in the country, particularly among youth, and to create a valuable human resource in the field of electronics, communications...satellite, space and information sciences."



Announcing the Andaman and Nicobar Islands DXpedition

Because the DXpedition was hastily organized, VU2RBI and the NIAR made an urgent plea for financial and equipment assistance. Frank Rosenkranz, DL4KQ; INDEXA director and GDXF president, Franz Langer, DJ9ZB, on behalf of the German DX Foundation; and INDEXA hastily coordinated efforts to donate a Cushcraft A3WS WARC tribander along with an A103 30-meter kit.

The final antenna line-up included a 7-element tribander at 60 ft. above the hotel roof, inverted Vs, an 80m dipole, a SteppIR at 15 feet on the Port Blair Science Museum, and the WARC beam with 30m add-on

erected at the college dorm.

The DXpedition team worked feverishly to provide contacts to the world until suddenly the unthinkable occurred!

Tragedy Strikes

On 26 December 2004, without warning, a rare undersea earthquake known as a megathrust earthquake struck in the Indian Ocean at 00:58:53 UTC off the western coast of northern Sumatra, Indonesia. The 9.0 earthquake released energy equal to 32,000 megatons of TNT and generated tsunamis that claimed

(Continued on page 2)

inside...

VU4 Lifelines
Message to Emergency Ops
Member Correspondence

Profile: UX5UO—Gennady Treus

SK Report

Tsunami...from page 1



Pre-DXpedition publicity photos

the lives of more than 167,000 people while obliterating property and devastating the shores of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, and other countries. Ironically, only three days before a magnitude 8.1 earthquake struck an uninhabited area west of New Zealand's sub-Antarctic Auckland Islands and north of Australia's Macquarie Island. This was an unusual event because earthquakes of magnitude 8 or more do not usually occur more than once a year. Because the two quakes occurred on opposite sides of the Indo-Australian tectonic plate, some seismologists speculated there might be a connection between the two earthquakes, questioning the possibility that the first earthquake might have been a catalyst for the Indian Ocean earthquake. Stranger still, the Indian Ocean earthquake struck almost exactly one year (within an hour) after a magnitude 6.6 earthquake struck Bam in Iran. This earthquake took 30,000 lives.

Health and Welfare

The magnitude and scope of this disaster immediately and drastically altered the objectives of the VU4 DXpeditioners who, thankfully, survived the ravages of the tsunami. The DXpedition goals now shifted to providing emergency communications in an environment of chaos and uncertainty.

The accompanying article, provided by the Voice of America, offers insight into the contributions of the amateur radio operators who, by coincidence or Divine Providence, were on the scene when the tragedy struck.

Ham Radio Operators Become Lifeline for Tsunami-Stricken Indian Islands

by Anjana Pasricha, New Delhi, 05 – January - 2005

Ham radio operators all over India are helping to reunite families and assist in relief operations in the wake of the tsunami disaster. The work is especially vital in the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which suffered widespread devastation, and where as many as 5,000 people are still missing.

On December 26, the world collapsed for Calcutta resident, San-chita Saha, whose husband runs a tiny cloth shop in India's distant Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The tsunami had struck, and communication links with the islands had snapped.

Mrs. Saha imagined the worst. She says for days her desperate household did not eat, did not sleep, and did not know what to do.

Then her brother-in-law read in the newspaper that ham radio operators had linked up all over India to provide information about missing or separated families. He went to a ham operator in Calcutta and within a day the household was smiling again. Mrs. Saha learned her husband was well and living in a camp, although his shop on Port Blair was destroyed.

In the days after the disaster, for countless families, ham radio operators became a lifeline as they helped locate hundreds of people separated from their families.

Their effort was particularly important for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where telephone links are still not working properly. The low-lying islands, 1,500 kilometers from the Indian mainland, were right in the path of the massive waves triggered by an earthquake near Indonesia.

The effort to reunite families on the islands was led by a New Delhi housewife, Bharathi Prasad. She was visiting the islands' capital, Port Blair to set up its first ham radio station when the disaster struck,

and the chain of 570 islands was cut off from the world.

But within hours, Bharathi Prasad put up her radio with the use of a hotel generator, and reached out to other ham operators.

Soon she and six colleagues were conveying thousands of messages to and from the islands.

"We have collected all the messages from the mainland, and we have made a big list with the telephone numbers of the local people and then we have conveyed their messages to the local people, what is their welfare, what are they doing, and is there any help required from the mainland," she said. "When I am giving a call to a local man, they felt so happy."

The army and government have stepped in to help the ham operators with batteries and other gear. They have now established seven radio stations on the islands.

For people scattered on the three dozen inhabited islands, the radio has become the only hope for tracing relatives. Many families were separated after the disaster as rescued people ended up in separate shelters. And many people had friends or relatives living on separate islands.

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Taking a cue from the ham operators, the state radio in Port Blair also is using the airwaves to convey messages from a steady stream of people who turn up everyday, desperately trying to reach their loved ones.

The station director at Port Blair's All India Radio, K. Rajan, says they have cancelled all regular programming and are focusing on helping families communicate.

"By broadcasting the SOS we are helping all the people, people are very anxious to know the whereabouts of their relatives, who are either employed or living in far-flung islands," he said.

Hundreds of messages go out everyday—a school boy tells a father he will take the first boat to fetch him, a Catholic priest urges his family to leave a devastated island as soon as possible.

Hams are also helping out in other parts of India stricken by the tsunami. In the hours after the disaster, Sandeep Shah and a group of volunteers in Bangalore packed their radio equipment, pooled some money, and came to the southeastern coast where thousands of families are homeless.

Mr. Shah is helping local authorities streamline relief operations in Cuddalore district in Tamil Nadu state.

Mr. Shah says with telephone landlines down in remote areas and mobile phones often jammed by heavy traffic, it is not always possible to know what is needed where. He and other ham radio operators try to help.

"We see to it that it reaches the required area. We have two thousand food packets required in certain places," he said. "We have messages of missing child found, three new bodies found, number of damaged boats, all types of messages we pass across both ways from many, many locations."

It is not the first time ham operators are putting their hobby to use in

an hour of need. Four years ago, when Gujarat state was devastated by an earthquake, they also reached to help—but the scale of the operation is much bigger this time because people are affected in remote regions.

(Reprinted with permission of the VOA <www.VOA.com>)

A message to radio amateurs in tsunami-stricken areas

Dear Friends: It is with a heavy heart that your colleagues in the International DX Association send condolences to you and your countrymen.

As brothers and sisters on this planet, tragedy that befalls one of us befalls us all. Consequently, we deeply empathize with the pain of your losses. We also rejoice with you for those who were spared during the tsunami of 2004.

We admire your courage in the face of overwhelming adversity and we are proud of your valiant and untiring efforts to provide health and welfare communications during a time when other forms of communication failed.

Your generous and compassionate service to your fellow men and women brought comfort and relief and precipitated the delivery of life-sustaining supplies to so many victims of this disaster.

We regret that we cannot be physically present to assist with the rebuilding of lives and property but we continue to individually make financial contributions to assist in this effort. Our thoughts and prayers remain with you and we thank you for your humanitarian service in the name of amateur radio and all that is good in life and this world.

Sincerely, The Directors, Officers, Staff & Members of INDEXA

Member correspondence



Vladimir A. Kravchenko, UA0ACG, with the one that didn't get away!

INDEXA is pleased to share information e-mailed from one of its newest members, Vlad, UA0ACG.

Vlad is 45 years old, married, and has a daughter who is currently a student.

In 1975, Vlad took a great interest in amateur radio. He has worked with various club stations and while working at sea he held the SWL call UR2-083-179/mm from 1981 to 1986. In September, 2002, he worked with JT1FDK.

Vlad enjoys DXing, IOTA, and he loves to work on the Top Band. His current awards include 160 #851; WAZ 160 #158; and 5BDXCC #5197.

He operates a TS-940s transceiver and a homemade PA, 500 watts. His antennas include HB9CV on 20, 15, and 10 meters at 25 meters; a Delta and dipole on 160 and 40 meters at 27 meters, and a Delta on the WARC bands.

Turn your beams toward Russia and welcome Vlad to INDEXA!

UX5UO—Gennady V. Treus

If you have ordered QSL cards from "UX5UO print," then you have met Gennady Treus, UX5UO.

Gennady resides in Kiev, Ukraine, with his XYL, Antoinia, and their daughter Julia. Like her parents, Julia, has many talents. She enjoys computers and is the webmaster of the "UX5UO print" website.

In addition to the time he devotes to DXing, Gennady owns and operates "UX5UO print," is a school teacher, and is QSL manager to many DX stations. No doubt about it—he should definitely add "multi-tasker" to his resume!



Gennady, UX5UO, (left) with Igor, UT5UCM, at Igor's dacha located 35 km from Kiev, Ukraine. Gennady and Igor have been friends since 1956.

Silent Key

Doug Campbell, N1CWR, reports the passing of INDEXA member Stephen L. Wallace, N4PWO.

Steve joined INDEXA in 1991 and he supported DX until his recent passing.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with him and his family.

Tsunami assistance

Your donations to INDEXA contributed to an antenna that provided emergency communications during the tsunami disaster.

Help us make more DXpedition dollars available by signing-up TODAY for the INDEXA e-newsletter!

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